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SUBJECT: JORDANIAN GID DIRECTOR RESPONDS TO ALLEGATIONS OF  
MISSIONARY DEPORTATIONS

Classified By: Ambassador David Hale for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary: Following reports of deportations and residency refusals of foreign missionaries, the Ambassador asked Jordan's Intelligence Director in early January for an explanation. Dahabi replied in writing on January 7 affirming Jordan's commitment to hosting minority religious sects and a diversity of churches. He noted that "although the Jordanian constitution guarantees religious freedoms, this does not equate with breaking the law, defying public mores, or offending any other sect or group." Those deported or refused residency, according to Dahabi, were asked to leave because they violated Jordanian residency or work regulations or were thought to be the targets of attacks due to their alleged missionary activities. End Summary.

Deportations Raised with GID  
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12. (C) The Ambassador raised the issue of deportations of missionaries with General Intelligence Director Lt. General Mohamed Dahabi on January 2, inquiring about approximately a dozen specific cases of foreign Christian religious workers and missionaries who have been deported, or had their residence requests denied, over the preceding year. The Ambassador urged GID to review the cases and reconsider deportation decisions. In response, Dahabi claimed that missionaries are getting "more aggressive" in Jordan, and explained that GID counseled religious workers to reduce their proselytizing activities before deportations or residency revocations were implemented. Dahabi said that their activities bring them to the attention of takfirists, which limits the GID's ability to ensure their security.

13. (SBU) In 2007, the Embassy has received reports of nearly a dozen cases of foreign Christian pastors, missionaries or priests that faced challenges with Jordanian immigration officials. Jordan Evangelical Theological Seminary (JETS) president Imad Shehadeh told poloff in September that it has become increasingly difficult for his institution to secure visas for students or faculty members, and cited approximately 19 individuals of Egyptian, Syrian and Iraqi nationality that were denied entry or residence this school year.

14. (C) On December 7, a Finnish pastor, who claimed to be legally resident in Jordan, was summoned by GID under another pretext, taken into custody, questioned and held by GID and PSD - Jordan's Public Security Directorate or national police - for 36 hours, escorted home for an hour to collect his possessions, and expeditiously returned to Finland. The Embassy heard of event from his wife, who left Jordan the following week. According to her, her husband was not actively proselytizing, but would discuss his faith with Muslims if asked. They have requested the Finnish Embassy in Damascus make a formal inquiry into the legal rationale for his deportation. Dahabi's January 7 letter challenged the legitimacy of the pastor's claim of legal residence, and

explained that "his activities were in violation of the law and provocative; they aroused public sensitivities and undermined the social fabric of the Jordanian society, while placing his own safety in jeopardy."

#### Unofficial Churches Face Challenges

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15. (C) The problem - as described by local religious leaders - affects unofficial churches, specifically the Assemblies of God, the Nazarene Church, the Baptist Church and several evangelical churches. These churches have long described their disputes and dissatisfaction with the hierarchy of Orthodox churches responsible for registration and recognition in Jordan. Dahabi, as well, alluded to the divide by referencing a September 29 letter from the Council for Middle East Churches to King Abdullah, requesting that missionary activity in Jordan be halted "given its damaging effect on Christian-Muslim relations and historic/social ties."

16. (C) In his January 7 letter to the Ambassador, Dahabi acknowledged Jordan's desire to "be a model for religious social and political tolerance" while maintaining its right to maintain the social fabric of the country and protect missionaries whose activities could place them in harm's way. Dahabi stated that "there is no policy in Jordan to oppress religious freedoms," and went on to list a number of minority religious communities (e.g. the Druze, Bahi'i, and Jehovah's Witnesses) that face "no interference from the state." Dahabi added that "Jordan has a diversity of churches, including fronts for persons/groups who practice proselytizing."

#### GID: Deported were Illegal Residents

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17. (C) In his written response, Dahabi proceeded to address the specific list of cases of Americans, Egyptians and Koreans raised by the Ambassador in his January 2 meeting. In the majority of cases, GID concluded that the individuals had been illegally resident in Jordan, and were therefore violating Jordanian law and subject to deportation. NOTE: Applications for residency are technically submitted to and approved by the Ministry of Interior. All such applications are vetted by the GID prior to approval. Neither the GID nor the MOI are required by Jordanian law to provide a reason for refusing a residence permit. END NOTE. In several other cases, Dahabi noted that they "find themselves compelled to refuse residence permit renewal in order to preserve the lives and wellbeing of such activists."

18. (C) COMMENT: The Jordanian government has made and continues to make public commitments to support religious freedoms and positive interfaith relations amongst Christian and Muslim communities. However, some elements perceive the activism of missionaries as a potential catalyst to disrupting the balances that exist between Christian and Muslim populations. And due to rifts between the orthodox and evangelical Christian communities, the evangelical communities find few Jordanian defenders in their court. In fact, because Evangelical conversions are almost exclusively made from the ranks of Jordanian Orthodox Christians, not Muslims, Jordan's Christian community leaders are among those most hostile to Western missionaries. The Embassy will continue to discuss this issue with the Jordanian leadership as well as with traditional and non-traditional religious communities in Jordan.

Hale